

# 2003 Deer Season Forecast

by John Higley

All across the state, during the deer seasons of 2002, the universal lament by hunters was that the weather was not their friend. It was too hot and dry for good deer hunting, they groaned. And what do you know, the final estimated harvest tallied by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) seemed to bear them out. In 2001, when the fall months were also warm, the estimated buck take was 33,273 for all zones and special hunts; in 2002 that number dropped to 31,553.

To those who have hunted California regularly for many years, there is no surprise here. The last time the kill rose significantly was in 2000 when stormy weather actually arrived during the season rather than a month later. That year the harvest of bucks climbed to 39,062.

Despite the fact that the over all statewide hunter success rate in 2002 was only 17 percent, as compared to 21 percent in 2000, the season was very good for some hunters who have learned how to put themselves in the right place at the right time, hot weather or cold, and those who were just plain lucky. Looking at some zones with higher percentages of success, we find that hunters in the A zone scored around 27 percent of the time; B zone hunters 23 percent of the time and hunters in the X zones enjoyed anywhere from 24 percent to 49 percent success. Incidentally, the above figures were rounded to the nearest whole number for simplification.

As anyone who hunts deer in the Golden State knows, there is a wide variety of hunts to choose from. They also know that drawing a tag for premium hunts, including special general methods hunts, archery hunts, junior hunts and muzzleloading rifle hunts, not to mention regular X zones hunts, takes some doing. To get a tag you've got to apply and face the sometimes long odds in the June drawing. However, the unique thing about California hunting is that you can still purchase tags over the counter for many other zones. So, if you wish, you can hunt somewhere every year whether or not you're lucky in the draw.

Speaking of the drawing, Craig Stowers, Deer Program Coordinator for the DFG, noted the initiation of a preference point system for the premium deer hunts where quotas are always met in the drawing. Beginning last year, hunters who put in for one of these hunts and failed to get a tag, started earning preference points that will accrue until they are drawn. For 2003, 90 percent of the available tags will go to preference point holders and 10 percent will be awarded in the random draw.

Okay, the obvious question here is what will the year 2003 bring? Well, no one can predict the weather conditions accurately so far in advance so the soothsayer with the crystal ball will draw upon years and years of experience—and make an educated guess. The focus here will be on a Deer Assessment Unit (DAU) basis. The 11 DAUs are areas with similar habitat characteristics that encompass several existing deer hunt zones each. By looking at an entire region, rather than trying to pinpoint deer numbers in one portion of what may be a huge chunk of similar real estate, the DFG hopes to get a more accurate sample of general trends as they fluctuate up or down over a period of years.

Before exploring the DAUs, here are a few details to give you a better understanding of the scope of deer hunting in California. First, there are six recognized subspecies of mule deer in the state including Rocky Mountain mule deer, Inyo mule deer, California mule deer, burro deer, Southern mule deer and Columbian black-tailed deer.

As for Zone D13, the general rifle season left a lot to be desired. That's not surprising because the zone was one of several D zones closed to hunting due to extreme fire danger last fall. The other closed zones will be noted later. Anyway, the carryover should be noticeable in D13 this year. Assuming, of course, that the hunt is held as scheduled.

The last zone in these DAUs is B4 where hunters took 477 bucks last year and 549 bucks in 2001. Over all, the deer population in these DAUs is estimated to be around 200,704 animals. That's slightly down from 2001 when it was 208,509.

**\*\*Note** Population figures in these DAUs, as with the others to follow, are based on a three-year average and vary due to conditions during surveys and final harvest numbers. In other words they're useful to establish population trends but they are not exact.

### **Northwestern California (DAU 3)**

This DAU takes in zones B1 through B6, minus B4, and contains some of the best blacktail deer range in the West. There is an apparent downward trend in Zone B6 where the positive effects of massive wildfires in 1987 are waning over time. Just the same, things are not all bad in the zone where hunters harvested 1,416 bucks in 2002 and 1,420 bucks in 2001.

Second, deer occupy 64 million acres of California soil, 46 percent of which is public land administered by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Roughly 50 percent is private land and the balance is overseen by various agencies including the DFG. The most numerous of the state's deer are blacktails which occupy the coastal mountains roughly from Santa Barbara to the Oregon border and range inland from Calaveras County north along the western slope of the Cascade-Sierra Nevada range.

Blacktails are popular with hunters because there are a lot of tags available throughout the zones where they live. However, Rocky Mountain mule deer are probably the most coveted because of their larger antler and body size and the type of relatively open habitat they prefer. Wouldn't you know it, though, these deer reside in the X zones where tags are always at a premium.

To most knowledgeable California big game hunters, any deer tag is a good deer tag even if it's for an area with a less than sterling track record. The more time one spends, even in a low success D zone, the better the odds are for consistent success. That said, here's a look at how things are going in the various DAUs as of 2003.

### **North/South Central Coast (DAUs 1 & 2)**

DAUs 1 and 2 combined include the southern and northern portions of huge Zone A, Zone D13 and Zone B4. Zone A is unique for that's where the earliest deer hunts in the state are held. Archery hunting there starts in July and rifle hunting begins in August. Last year the harvest was estimated at 10,125 bucks, most of which were forked horns, which is not unusual for the region. In 2001 the take was a bit higher at 11,387. Based on the number of tags sold the success rates were 29 percent in 2001 and 27 percent in 2002. The lower take may result in more available bucks this year assuming the weather cooperates and is a trifle cooler than before.

Throughout the B zones hunter success was right around 22 percent in 2001 and, as we saw previously, 23 percent in 2002. The zone where the most bucks were taken is Zone B1 where the estimate was 3,275. In 2001 that figure was lower at 2,852.

There are 55,000 tags available for the B zones of which 40,908 were purchased for the 2002 season. According to Craig Stowers, and senior wildlife biologist Dave Smith in the DFG's Northern California/North Coast Region, the herds in this region are stable despite the slight decline in B6. The deer population throughout the region was estimated to be around 146,003 in 2002 as compared to 157,600 in 2001.

#### **Cascade/North Sierra (DAU 4)**

This DAU contains the four C zones which cover an area roughly from Butte County to the Oregon border. These zones extend east from Interstate Highway 5 to the west slope of the Cascade Range. In 2002 11,500 tags were available for these popular zones and all of them were taken before the season opened.

The total kill in the C zones for 2002 was estimated at 1,619 bucks as compared to 1,776 in 2001. The success rate dropped slightly from 16 percent in 2001 to 15 percent last year.

Since both years were warm, there was only sporadic migration activity by the deer until the season was over. By comparison, in the year 2000, when early storms did come during the general rifle season, more than 1,900 bucks were taken.

In addition to the above figures, it's only fair to add the results from late hunt G1 which takes place in Zone C4. Last year 3,500 tags were available (and sold) and hunters harvested 585 bucks during the nine-day hunt. In 2001 the estimated take was 659 bucks taken by the same number of hunters. After losing deer for many years the population in DAU 4 seems to be holding steady. In 2001 the three year average was 38,142 animals and in 2002 it was 39,057.

#### **Northeast California (DAU 9)**

Some of the most sought-after tags in this part of the state are those for the seven northern X zones (out of a total of 17 X zones) where many of the state's Rocky Mountain mule deer, along with some blacktail/mule deer hybrids, reside. Zones included in DAU 9 are X1, X2, X3a, X3b, X4, X5a and X5b. The most tags are available for Zone X1 (2,850) and the fewest for Zone X5a (130). For the whole region last year only 4,965 tags were available and 1,151 bucks were taken. The

highest success rate (49 percent) occurred in Zone X3a where 142 bucks were taken.

Once again hot and dry weather had a detrimental affect on hunting success last year when the take of bucks went down in every zone. The deer population average in these X zones was down slightly from 22,799 in 2001 to 21,241 in 2002. Stowers noted that the small difference may be a reflection of certain conditions during spring and fall surveys as well as the lower kill by hunters which is also figured into the equation by the complicated computer model used.

#### **Northeast Sierra/East Sierra (DAUs 10 & 11)**

Five of the state's remaining X zones, X6a, X6b, X7a, X7b and X8, are situated in DAU 10 from Alpine County north. Meanwhile, X9a, X9b, X10 and X12 are in DAU 11. The estimated harvest in 2002 for all of the zones was 1,005 while in 2001 it was slightly higher at 1,039. The best success rate is usually in Zone X7a where hunters scored 39 percent of the time last year. Most of the deer in these zones are generally high on summer range until fall storms drive them down to lower areas. When that happens the harvest goes up accordingly.

The total number of deer in DAU 10 is estimated to be around 8,267 for

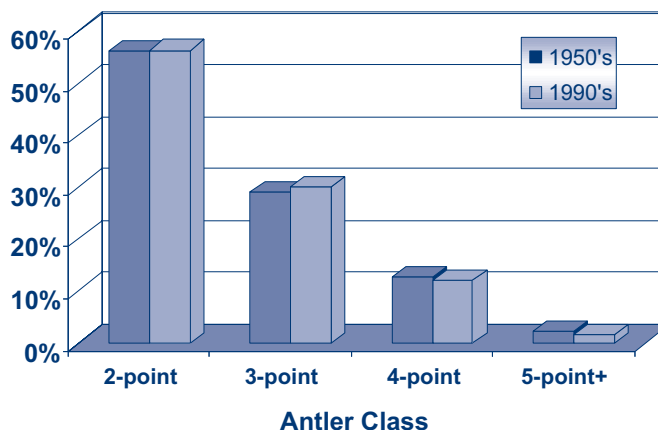
Many say that deer hunting has changed in California, and there is little to refute that claim. Deer numbers peaked in California in the 1950s, and since that time the human population has greatly increased, while the number of deer hunters and deer harvested has declined. Habitat loss and competition for remaining resources have also taken their toll.

One thing that has not changed, however, is the percentage of deer harvested with large antlers. A state-wide comparison of the antler class of deer taken from 1951-1960 and 1991-2000 shows that about half (56 percent) of the deer harvested in both time periods were forked horn bucks. Three-point bucks showed a similar rate of 29-30 percent, four-points were harvested at approximately 12-13 percent, and bucks with five points or greater made up about 1.5-2 percent of the total re-

ported buck harvest. The data indicate that deer of each antler class have been taken at very nearly the same rate in the 1950s and the 1990s.

*Data analyzed by Mary Sommer, an Associate Wildlife Biologist in the DFG's deer program.*

**Comparison of 1950s and 1990s Buck Harvest  
by Percent Antler Class**



2002 and 7,617 for 2001. In DAU 11 the estimate is 11,281 animals for 2002, down from 11,700 in 2001 and higher than 2000 when the tally was 11,000. All in all the deer herds in DAUs 10 and 11 seem to have increased slightly and stabilized since declining in the early 1990s.

#### **Central/Southern Sierra (DAUs 5 & 6)**

DAU 5 contains five D zones including D3, D4 and D5 which are covered by the same tag. There are 33,000 tags available for the three zones and last year 29,953 were sold. The average hunter success here is around 10 percent and the total number of bucks taken last year was 2,988.

Zones D6 and D7 are also in DAU 5 and while the success rate for the 19,000 tag holders in the zones was 10 percent to 11 percent the estimated harvest in 2002 was up over 2001 in both zones. In 2001 D6 hunters got 865 bucks and in 2002 they harvested 971; in D7 the numbers were 903 and 989 respectively.

The population of deer in the above zones was estimated at 104,036 in 2002, a jump from 91,347 in 2001 and 83,700 in 2000.

Meanwhile, DAU 6 is home to zones D8, D9 and D10. Both D9 and

D10 saw an increase in the take and a slight increase in percent of hunter success which ranged from 12 percent (D9) to 14 percent (D10). In 2001 the harvest in D9 was 187 and in 2002 it was 234; in D10 the figures were 64 and 99. The population of deer in DAU 6 was estimated to be 20,320 in 2002 and 19,769 in 2001 meaning that things are on a level plane for the time being.

#### **South Coast/Desert (DAUs 7 & 8)**

Earlier we learned that Zone D13 (in DAUs 1 and 2) was closed to hunting last year during the general rifle season and now we'll get to the other zones that were subject to closures due to fire danger. All of DAU 7, which includes zones D11, D14, D15, D16 and D19, was closed for most of the general rifle season except for Zone D16. For that reason the harvest in those zones was obviously less than usual and not a true reflection of what a regular season would bring.

In any event, many tag holders were granted refunds of their tag costs because they couldn't hunt in the zones for which their tags were valid. Needless to say, there should be some carryover of bucks in DAU 7 in 2003. As it is the population estimate for DAU

7 shows a slight decline in the three year average, from 16,537 in 2001 to 14,480 in 2002.

As for DAU 8, this region includes desert zones D12, D17 and X9c. These zones offer some of the toughest deer hunting in the state. The success rate in zones D12, D17 and X9c falls between 7 and 10 percent. Depending on where you are in these zones, vehicle access is restricted by wilderness areas, the Mojave National Preserve and Death Valley National Park.

The average deer population estimate in DAU 8 shows 4,664 animals in 2001 and 4,530 in 2002. The animals are scattered but their numbers are about the same from year to year.

No matter where you hunt in this state, one of the keys to eventual success is a studied approach to deer hunting. Deer aren't just everywhere, and once you learn where they are apt to be in a particular zone at a particular time, you are one step closer to being one of the Golden State's successful deer hunters. Good luck in 2003!

*John Higley is a freelance writer and avid deer hunter.*

# Archers Perform Well in First-ever "A-O" Elk Hunts

by Jon Fischer

For the first time in 2002, the Fish and Game Commission approved elk hunts exclusively for archers at two California locations. The Commission authorized five either-sex archery only elk tags for the Owens Valley, with season dates that extended from August 10-18. The DFG received 539 applications for these five tags, which provided a premium opportunity to hunt elk during the rut within the Bishop, Independence, Tinemaha and Lone Pine zones. The first Owens Valley archery-only tule elk hunt was a big success; archers took two bulls and one cow during the season—a 60 percent hunter success rate.

Less than one month later, the first archery-only hunt for Rocky Mountain elk occurred in northeastern California. The Commission authorized five either-sex archery only tags for this hunt, which also was timed to occur during the rut (the breeding period for tule elk can occur as much as one month earlier than for other elk subspecies). The DFG received 377 applications for five archery only tags in northeastern California. The northeastern California elk hunt zone is large, and held without crowding, the archers drawn for this hunt. Archers performed well, and took home two bulls as a result of the hunt—a 40 percent hunter success rate.

The DFG is optimistic that interest in the archery-only elk tags will continue to increase

as more hunters become aware of this unique opportunity. Last year, more than 21,000 applicants competed for elk tags through the Big Game Drawing. Although tagholders may use archery equipment for any public elk hunt, the archery-only elk tags provide a unique opportunity to hunt elk during the rut, and unobstructed by other elk hunters using general methods.

*Jon Fischer is a Senior Wildlife Biologist and statewide coordinator of the DFG's elk progra*

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## Deer Management Program Web Site Has A New Look!

Have a deer hunting question? Take a look at the revamped Deer Management Program Web site at [www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/index.htm](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/index.htm). It features zone information, current year deer seasons, quotas and regulations, as well as deer harvest reports, and much more.

One of the most useful links is Zone Maps and General Zone Information, available at [www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/zonemapsinfo.htm](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/zonemapsinfo.htm). This site provides not only a link to detailed maps of each of the deer zones and special hunts, but also offers a brief write-up of general information on most of the deer zones. This information has been prepared by the local biologists to assist you in selecting a hunt during the deer tag application process or in preparing for a hunt after you have received a deer tag. Such topics include: land ownership, access, camp sites, general weather conditions, and sources of maps of the area; and of course, the one thing that every hunter wants to know: where to find deer.



# California's 2002 Wild Pig Harvest

by Cris Langner

The 2001/2002 wild pig hunting season extended from July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002 with no daily possession or seasonal bag limits. A total of 33,762 pig tags were sold, which included 32,842 (books of five) resident tags and 920 nonresident tags. Hunters voluntarily returned 7,770 wild pig license tags.

Of the 7,770 pigs reported taken, 4,454 (57.3 percent) were harvested from our Central Coast region, down slightly from last year (61.3 percent). This region of the state has consistently reported the highest number of pigs taken. The San Joaquin Valley & Southern Sierra region came in second with 1,660 (21.4 percent) pigs reported taken, a slight increase from last year (19.3 percent).

The success rates for particular hunting methods are as follows: hunters using rifles accounted for the largest proportion of the harvest again this year with 90 percent (7,005) of the take. Archery hunters, though few and far between, took 368 pigs which accounted for 4.7 percent of the total harvest, up slightly from last year. All other hunting methods combined accounted for only 5 percent (307) of the take.

Of the total reported pigs taken, a total of 4,112 (53 percent) were males and 3,516 (45.3 percent) were females. Similar to years past, most pigs (94.5 percent) were taken on private land. The remaining 5.3 percent were taken on public lands like Fort Hunter Liggett and Vandenberg Air Force Base. This year 6.8 percent (521) of pig hunters used trailing hounds and 12 percent (935) hunted within their county of residence.

*Cris Langner is a scientific aide in the DFG Wild Pig and Black Bear programs who compiles and analyzes data from license tags.*

## Reported Wild Pig Take 1997-2002

County	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02
<b>Northern California-North Coast Region</b>					
Humboldt	43	30	20	9	37
Modoc	0	3	0	0	4
Shasta	53	55	84	62	84
Siskiyou	21	17	8	4	7
Tehama	380	493	398	451	495
Trinity	23	8	16	34	30
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>657</b>
<b>% of Statewide Harvest</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>8.91</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region</b>					
Amador	1	0	0	0	0
Butte	0	1	2	2	1
Calaveras	6	2	1	11	2
Colusa	151	117	64	105	158
El Dorado	0	0	0	2	0
Glenn	51	67	60	114	172
Nevada	17	9	7	15	13
Placer	2	3	0	10	2
Sacramento	0	1	0	0	0
San Joaquin	25	60	29	26	19
Solano	30	49	40	49	35
Sutter	64	59	45	46	92
Yolo	4	19	11	14	34
Yuba	4	1	0	9	4
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>532</b>
<b>% of Statewide Harvest</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<b>Central Coast Region</b>					
Alameda	68	97	45	34	30
Contra Costa	9	21	15	13	13
Lake	42	47	28	17	53
Mendocino	299	286	164	205	267
Monterey	1,194	2,063	1,620	1,881	1,944
Napa	66	65	24	16	8
San Benito	359	717	461	470	703
San Luis Obispo	522	544	541	512	523
San Mateo	1	6	4	24	12
Santa Clara	609	863	440	374	461
Santa Cruz	53	39	48	92	114
Sonoma	379	402	306	280	326
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>3,601</b>	<b>5,150</b>	<b>3,696</b>	<b>3,918</b>	<b>4,454</b>
<b>% of Statewide Harvest</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>62.58</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>57.3</b>
<b>San Joaquin Valley-Southern Sierra Region</b>					
Fresno	270	241	208	190	276
Kern	143	319	487	570	863
Kings	5	3	27	30	15
Madera	30	21	36	74	68
Mariposa	72	51	54	76	91
Merced	50	138	101	79	95
Stanislaus	183	303	103	119	106
Tulare	90	97	64	93	146
Tuolumne	0	6	1	0	0
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>1,231</b>	<b>1,660</b>
<b>% of Statewide Harvest</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>21.4</b>
<b>South Coast Region</b>					
Los Angeles	12	89	46	22	4
San Diego	0	3	0	0	0
Santa Barbara	185	337	247	230	430
Ventura	5	7	12	6	7
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>441</b>
<b>% of Statewide Harvest</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>5.7</b>
<b>Eastern Sierra - Inland Deserts Region</b>					
Riverside	7	19	17	5	6
San Bernardino	3	5	2	4	4
Unknown	2	43	20	10	16
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>% of Statewide Harvest</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>.33</b>
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>5,533</b>	<b>7,823</b>	<b>5,906</b>	<b>6,391</b>	<b>7,770</b>

# Ask A Biologist

**Q:** Why doesn't California have an antlerless deer harvest program similar to many of the other western states? *Nick Weder, Modesto*

**A:** The timing of this question couldn't be better, as we have just finished the antlerless hunt proposal process for the 2003 season. The short answer to the question is that the California Legislature restricted the DFG's use of this management practice back in 1958 through what's commonly called the Busch Bill. This bill resulted from the negative public perception of the DFG's now "infamous" 1956 deer season, in which hunters with unfilled tags were allowed to take does during the last three days of the season. As a result of the Busch Bill, authority to implement antlerless and/or either-sex hunts in 38 of California's counties (known as "veto" counties) rests solely with those county boards of supervisors. The DFG is required to annually submit any antlerless or either-sex hunt proposals (excluding those that occur on licensed Private Land Management areas) to the specified Board of Supervisors for approval. More often than not these proposals are rejected.

Antlerless hunts are proposed for a couple of reasons. Probably the most familiar to most is the need to rapidly reduce populations to prevent habitat destruction and reduce losses due to starvation and/or disease—which is why the 1956 hunt was held. The population was reduced to below the carrying capacity of the habitat, forage plants were allowed to recover, and deer populations quickly rebounded to levels the habitat could support. What followed were record buck-kills during the 1960s, but people don't seem to be able to make the connection between the two events.

Another reason to have antlerless hunts is to manipulate the sex/age ratios of the population to produce more of what most people want. Because California has focused on a bucks-only harvest for so long, we now have a deer population that is heavily skewed towards older age does. For example, one study I was involved with in Lassen County showed that the average age for a doe in that area was over 6 years, and several came in at over 16 years old. Productivity (fawn production) really drops off in does 8 years old and over, and they are essentially preventing new animals from entering the population because they are utilizing resources needed to support the younger animals.

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I continuously hear the same two arguments regarding antlerless hunting: (1) You can't tell how old a doe is just by looking at her so how can you be sure you're removing the older ones?; and (2) If you harvest does how can you expect to get more fawns? My standard answers are as follows: (1) That's true, you can't tell how old a doe is just by looking. However, since so many of them are of an older age class it doesn't really matter. You will remove them from the population in the proportion they occur; and (2) In the short run, you may not get more fawns by killing does. In the long run, a younger class of does means more productivity. Also, fawn survival would likely be increased due to decreased competition for resources. Since fawns are born at pretty close to a 50:50 male to female ratio there is a 50 percent chance of replacing that doe with a buck.

The DFG proposes an ABH (allowable buck harvest) and ADH (allowable doe harvest) annually in each deer hunt zone. To date, we have been largely unsuccessful in implementing any kind of systematic antlerless harvest, and have in fact been doing most of it through the PLM program and junior hunts. This level of harvest has no biological impact on the population—we only took 306 (reported) does statewide in 2002 out of an estimated population size of around 540,000. We can't even measure any changes to the population from a harvest of this size with the data collection techniques we now have available.

The DFG attends boards of supervisors meetings in the veto counties on a regular basis with very little success. I just went to one in mid-February—the county vetoed the hunt even though only one doe was taken

there in 2002. Most of the arguments I heard focused on the increased potential for trespass, private property damage, increased enforcement costs, etc.—social, not biological issues. I came away from the meeting convinced that it was fruitless to continue to provide a logical, biological argument to what is basically an emotional issue—many people just don't like the thought of killing female deer. It is impossible to manage a population with the ability to manipulate only one component of that population (bucks). The DFG cannot change this policy on its own and will need all the public support it can get in the form of letters and testimony at these meetings.

In my opinion, given today's land management practices, it is impossible to increase the overall deer population because the quantity and quality of available habitat is what ultimately drives deer numbers. What we can do is manipulate the sex/age ratios within that population to produce more of what most hunters want—bucks. Antlerless hunting is the primary component of white-tailed deer management in many states, and is a standard management practice in just about every western state with mule deer. It is incomprehensible to me why California is not doing the same.

**by Craig Stowers**

## Permanent Chronic Wasting Disease Regulation Proposed

To help prevent the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease into California, the Fish and Game Commission is considering a permanent regulation restricting the importation of out-of-state deer and elk carcasses. Unlike the emergency regulation adopted last August, the proposed permanent regulation will not allow whole carcasses and heads to be brought into California.

Although much has been learned about Chronic Wasting Disease, no one is yet able to say how it is transmitted. To address this issue, states in which the disease is present have adopted strict regulations regarding the movement of carcasses out-of-state. Other states have either adopted similar regulations or are strongly recommending similar procedures to their hunters.

The proposed regulation would ban the importation of whole carcasses and/or uncleaned heads into California. Instead of allowing the hunter 72 hours to get to the meat processor or taxidermist, as was allowed last year, no part of the carcass which contains the spinal column and/or nervous tissue will be allowed into the state. Hunters must process the carcass themselves (if quartering the carcass be sure to completely remove the spinal column) or have it commercially processed before it can be brought into the state. Whole heads will no longer be permitted—all nervous system tissue (including the brain) and spinal column must be removed.

### **Proposed regulatory language:**

- § 712. Restriction of Importation of Hunter-Harvested Deer and Elk Carcasses. No hunter harvested deer or elk (cervid) carcass or parts of cervid carcass shall be imported into the State, except for the following body parts:
- boned-out meat and commercially processed cuts of meat.
  - portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached.
  - hides with no heads attached.
  - clean skull plates (no meat or tissue attached) with antlers attached.
  - antlers with no meat or tissue attached.
  - finished taxidermy heads.
  - upper canine teeth (buglers, whistlers, ivories).



# Ask A Warden

by Lt. Liz Schwall

**Q**: Recently, I was warned by a deputy sheriff that I was violating Fish & Game Code section 3004 by hunting with my bow too close to dwellings. I am aware that it is illegal to shoot a firearm within 150 yards of dwellings but I did not know this applied to archery equipment as well. Does it?

**A**: Fish & Game Code section 3004 establishes a "safety zone" of 150 yards (450 feet) of any "occupied dwelling house, residence, or other building or barn or other outbuilding used in connection therewith." The section further states that it is unlawful for any person who is not the property owner, person in possession of the property (like a lessee), or a person having express permission of the property owner to "...hunt or to discharge while hunting, any firearm or other deadly weapon..."

So what does this all mean? It means that you are free to hunt your own property, or on property where you have express permission to be, as close to your own home or barns as you like. However, it does not permit you to hunt (on your own property or with permission on someone else's property) with a firearm or other deadly weapon within 150 yards of any neighbor's house, barn, outbuilding, etc. without the neighbor's express permission.

Although the California Penal Code does not specifically define archery equipment as being a deadly weapon, clearly bows and arrows would fall under this definition as they are designed to kill game. Persons hunting with firearms or archery equipment on public lands that adjoin private lands need to be mindful of this section and maintain the 150 yard distance from homes, barns, and other outbuildings.

**Q**: I've recently moved to California from Oregon. I'm on active military duty, stationed in San Diego. I'm a hunter and I'd like to try hunting in California, how long do I have to reside in California before I can purchase a resident hunting license?

**A**: Generally, in order to purchase resident hunting license, a person must reside continually in California for 6 months prior to obtaining one. However, active military personnel are exempt from this requirement. As long as you have a hunter education certificate (from any state) or a license from another state that is either current or issued in either of the two previous years, you are free to buy a resident license.

*Lt. Liz Schwall is the statewide coordinator of the CalTIP program. She can be reached via email at [lschwall@dfg.ca.gov](mailto:lschwall@dfg.ca.gov).*

**Q**: I know we can't put out bait for bears in California, but can we use scents to attract black bears? For example, the scent of food like vanilla extract applied to foliage or the scent of food applied to a cotton ball and hung from a tree.

How about the use of commercially available scent concealers? Are they legal?

**A**: Section 365(e) of the California Code of Regulations, Title 14 covers this. It says: "Bait: No feed, bait or other materials capable of attracting a bear shall be placed or used for the purpose of taking or pursuing a bear. No bear shall be taken over such bait. No person may take a bear within a 400-yard radius of a garbage dump or bait."

Therefore, if a scent or attractant were used, no bear could be taken within 400 yards of it. There is no prohibition against using scent "concealers."

**Q**: I have a question about deer. My (non-hunting) neighbor has put out grain for the deer for years but was recently told that she is breaking the law by doing so. Feeding deer seems like a pretty innocent activity. Why is this a problem?

**A**: Title 14 section 251.3 addresses the issue of knowingly feeding big game mammals. The section says that "No person shall knowingly feed big game mammals..." If a complaint is received regarding someone feeding big game, usually deer, the DFG is required to warn the person first by sending them a notice (via certified mail) ordering them to stop. If the person fails to

# Northeastern Zone a Gold Mine For 15 Lucky Hunters

by Jon Fischer

This year 15 extremely lucky hunters were drawn for the first ever Northeastern California Rocky Mountain Elk Hunt. Five hunters were drawn for the archery only season and the remaining 10 hunters were selected for the general season. The hunt area was very large and encompassed much of northeastern California. Most of the new zone had never been opened to elk hunting, and

recent DFG studies confirmed the presence of several healthy herds of elk within the zone.

The DFG surveyed the elk hunters after the season in order to evaluate their experiences. The success of these two hunts was high—nine out of 10 rifle hunters tagged an animal, and two of the five archery hunters were also successful. Nearly all of the hunters reported having a favorable experience and were thankful for the opportunity to hunt elk in California.

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## *"Ask a Warden" continued*

stop within seven days of receiving the notice, they are deemed in violation of the section.

Feeding deer does seem an innocuous activity, so why is it prohibited? It is generally the position of the DFG that wild animals should in fact remain "wild." In our densely populated state, humans and wild animals are increasingly coming into conflict with each other. Unfortunately, many of these conflicts (often involving bears, coyotes, and deer) stem from the fact that the animals are attracted into suburban and urban neighborhoods looking for a "free lunch." Garbage cans and pet food left outside are major attractants for both bears and coyotes. While the occasional sighting of a bear, coyote or deer in one's garden or yard may be a welcome sight, it's pretty clear (based on the complaints that the DFG receives), that the public quickly loses tolerance for wildlife when garbage cans are

raided, property is damaged, pets are eaten or rose bushes are uprooted. For these reasons, wild animals should be allowed and encouraged to steer clear of humans. Well meaning persons who feed them may in fact be doing them a disservice.

When a wild animal discovers a readily available food source, naturally they stay close. The longer they take the "handouts," the less fear they have of humans. As they lose their natural survival instincts, they are far more likely to become prey to predators. Additionally, "fearless" wildlife is far more likely to be attacked by domestic dogs or loiter on highways where they are struck by cars. In most cases, wild animals are fully capable of fending for themselves, and in general, feeding by humans is neither necessary nor desirable.

# California's 2002 Bear Harvest

by Cris Langner

The 2002 black bear hunting season closed on December 29, making it the first time in six years that the season has run to its designated closure date. This was likely due to a regulation change in 2001, which increased the in-season closure mechanism from 1,500 to 1,700 bears reported harvested.

The License and Revenue Branch has reported that a total of 22,157 bear tags were sold in 2002 with 21,901 resident and 256 non-resident tags. Non-resident tag sales increased moderately from 2001 but still comprised just over one percent of tag sales. A total of 1,736 black bears were reported taken this year and overall hunter success was 7.8%, down from 2001.

Once again, success rates for the different hunting methods varied only marginally in 2002 compared to previous years. Hunters with trailing hounds took 913 bears, (52.6%), which is up from 2001 but still representing about half the harvest. Hunters took 644 bears (37.1%) while they were deer hunting, a slight increase from last year. Archery hunters accounted for only 89 kills, down about a percent from last year, while the number of hunters using guides decreased from 5.6% to 4.7% (81 kills).

According to bear take report cards, successful hunters spent an average of 3.7 days, and unsuccessful hunters an average of 8.0 days, hunting bear—slightly higher than in 2001. A total of 363 successful bear hunters said they had taken bears on private land.

Again in 2002 the general bear season and deer season overlapped in the A, B, C, D, and some of the X zones. Zones X1 through X7B opened on October 12th. During the general deer season hunters were limited to one dog per hunter. Regulation changes in 2001 continue to be the primary factor affecting tag sales, season closure, and changes in the proportions of bear take by hunting method.

*Cris Langner is a scientific aide in the DFG Wild Pig and Black Bear programs who compiles and analyzes data from license tags.*

For more information about black bear management and hunting in California, visit the DFG's new bear Web page at [www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/bear/index.htm](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/bear/index.htm).

## 2002 Black Bear Take

County	Males	Females	Unknown	Total
<b>Northern California-North Coast Region</b>				
Del Norte	17	11	0	28
Humboldt	86	60	1	147
Lassen	7	1	0	8
Modoc	1	3	0	4
Shasta	116	62	0	178
Siskiyou	128	69	0	197
Tehama	52	29	0	81
Trinity	97	81	1	179
Regional Total	504	316	2	822
<b>Statewide %</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>0.11%</b>	<b>47.4%</b>
<b>Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region</b>				
Alpine	1	4	0	5
Amador	0	0	0	0
Butte	29	18	0	47
Calaveras	14	4	0	18
Colusa	2	0	0	2
El Dorado	36	25	0	61
Glenn	16	9	0	25
Nevada	12	2	0	14
Placer	17	17	0	34
Plumas	35	39	1	75
Sierra	18	10	0	28
Yolo	1	0	0	1
Yuba	12	5	0	17
Regional Total	193	133	1	327
<b>Statewide %</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>0.05%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>
<b>Central Coast Region</b>				
Lake	5	6	0	11
Mendocino	38	40	0	78
San Luis Obispo	0	0	0	0
Regional Total	43	46	0	89
<b>Statewide %</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
<b>San Joaquin Valley-Southern Sierra Region</b>				
Fresno	53	25	0	78
Kern	36	34	0	70
Madera	34	16	0	50
Mariposa	17	6	0	23
Stanislaus	1	1	0	2
Tulare	75	54	0	129
Tuolumne	41	17	0	58
Regional Total	257	153	0	410
<b>Statewide %</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>23.6%</b>
<b>South Coast Region</b>				
Los Angeles	0	2	0	2
Santa Barbara	5	7	0	12
Ventura	16	10	0	26
Regional Total	21	19	0	40
<b>Statewide %</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
<b>Eastern Sierra-Inland Deserts Region</b>				
Inyo	4	1	0	5
Mono	6	2	0	8
Riverside	3	2	0	5
San Bernardino	13	12	0	25
Unknown	3	1	1	5
Regional Total	29	18	1	48
<b>Statewide %</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>0.04%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
<b>State Total</b>	<b>1,047</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1,736</b>
<b>State % Take</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>39.5%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

# 2002 Preliminary Deer Harvest Antler Class Data

The following table shows the percentage by antler class /of forked horn or better bucks and the total reported buck harvest for zones and hunts. *Data compiled by Russ Mohr, associate wildlife biologist with the DFG's deer program in Sacramento.*

Zone or Hunt	2 Point Bucks	3 Point Bucks	4 Point Bucks	4+ Point Bucks	Total Buck Kill	Zone or Hunt	2 Point Bucks	3 Point Bucks	4 Point Bucks	4+ Point Bucks	Total Buck Kill
Archery Only 1*	60.2%	23.9%	9.7%	5.3%	113	Hunt A15	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%		6
Archery Only 2*	51.0%	33.7%	11.2%	4.1%	98	Hunt A16	35.0%	50.0%	5.0%	10.0%	20
A Zone (South)	70.8%	22.2%	5.8%	0.6%	2362	Hunt A17					0
A Zone (North)	60.7%	28.4%	9.9%	1.0%	2067	Hunt A18	100.0%				1
Zone B1	43.6%	36.1%	17.3%	2.2%	1528	Hunt A19					0
Zone B2	52.5%	29.9%	14.6%	2.7%	1273	Hunt A20	38.9%	44.4%	11.1%	5.6%	18
Zone B3	52.6%	32.1%	11.6%	2.3%	346	Hunt A21		50.0%	50.0%		2
Zone B4	44.8%	35.9%	13.5%	5.2%	192	Hunt A22	50.0%	37.5%			8
Zone B5	51.1%	34.0%	12.8%	1.5%	329	Hunt A24	50.0%	50.0%			4
Zone B6	47.4%	33.9%	15.5%	2.7%	631	Hunt A25	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%		8
Zone C1	45.9%	35.4%	14.0%	4.4%	229	Hunt A26	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%		8
Zone C2	42.9%	37.9%	16.1%	2.5%	161	Hunt A27		100.0%			1
Zone C3	43.7%	31.4%	20.0%	4.9%	245	Hunt A30	25.0%		50.0%	25.0%	4
Zone C4	52.1%	34.5%	11.6%	1.5%	455	Hunt A31	44.4%	33.3%		11.1%	9
Zone D3	51.6%	29.4%	15.2%	3.4%	669	Hunt A32					0
Zone D4	49.2%	24.3%	23.2%	2.8%	177	Hunt G1	43.5%	34.1%	18.9%	3.2%	402
Zone D5	51.3%	30.5%	15.2%	2.6%	1116	Hunt G3	5.0%	30.0%	35.0%	30.0%	20
Zone D6	53.6%	28.0%	14.8%	3.4%	642	Hunt G6	47.1%	29.4%	23.5%		17
Zone D7	50.7%	32.6%	13.3%	3.0%	631	Hunt G7	66.7%	33.3%			3
Zone D8	58.7%	24.1%	13.7%	3.5%	315	Hunt G8					8
Zone D9	62.1%	25.5%	11.8%	0.7%	153	Hunt G9					4
Zone D10	53.6%	29.8%	14.3%	1.2%	84	Hunt G10	55.6%	22.2%	5.6%		18
Zone D11**	79.5%	13.6%	6.8%		44	Hunt G11	8.3%	8.3%			12
Zone D12	32.5%	42.5%	22.5%		40	Hunt G12	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%		5
Zone D13**	65.0%	24.4%	8.3%	1.4%	217	Hunt G13	25.0%				4
Zone D14**	54.7%	32.1%	11.3%	1.9%	53	Hunt G21	100.0%				2
Zone D15**	81.8%	18.2%			11	Hunt G37	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	8
Zone D16	67.3%	25.5%	6.1%		98	Hunt G38	72.7%	9.1%	18.2%		11
Zone D17	36.4%	42.4%	15.2%	6.1%	33	Hunt M3	8.3%	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%	12
Zone D19**	76.5%	17.6%	5.9%		17	Hunt M4	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%		4
Zone X1	45.0%	35.7%	16.6%	2.2%	367	Hunt M5		40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	5
Zone X2	47.9%	25.0%	16.7%	10.4%	48	Hunt M6					0
Zone X3a	29.8%	36.5%	27.9%	3.8%	104	Hunt M7	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%		9
Zone X3b	41.0%	37.2%	18.0%	2.7%	183	Hunt M8	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	6
Zone X4	40.8%	30.1%	24.3%	3.9%	103	Hunt M9	14.3%	14.3%	57.1%	14.3%	7
Zone X5a	28.6%	28.6%	39.3%	3.6%	28	Hunt M11			100.0%		4
Zone X5b	32.3%	25.8%	32.3%	9.7%	31	Hunt MA1	75.0%				4
Zone X6a	44.2%	25.6%	24.4%	4.7%	86	Hunt MA3	62.5%	37.5%			8
Zone X6b	39.7%	33.3%	23.8%	1.6%	63	Hunt J1	42.9%	57.1%			7
Zone X7a	31.6%	46.3%	18.9%	3.2%	95	Hunt J3	40.0%	60.0%			5
Zone X7b	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%	24	Hunt J4	25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	8
Zone X8	42.9%	27.3%	22.1%	7.8%	77	Hunt J7		50.0%			2
Zone X9a	41.9%	31.1%	18.2%	7.4%	148	Hunt J8			100.0%		1
Zone X9b	45.2%	35.5%	16.1%	1.6%	62	Hunt J9		100.0%			1
Zone X9c	47.6%	33.3%	16.7%	2.4%	42	Hunt J10	52.2%	17.4%	4.3%		23
Zone X10	48.0%	36.0%	12.0%	4.0%	25	Hunt J11	25.0%			50.0%	4
Zone X12	35.2%	31.3%	31.3%	1.7%	176	Hunt J12			33.3%	33.3%	3
Hunt A1	57.3%	28.7%	10.5%	3.5%	143	Hunt J13	100.0%				1
Hunt A3	51.2%	34.1%	7.3%	7.3%	41	Hunt J14	66.7%	16.7%			6
Hunt A4	50.0%		50.0%		2	Hunt J15	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%		4
Hunt A5	36.4%	36.4%	27.3%		11	Hunt J16	100.0%				1
Hunt A6	52.9%	29.4%	11.8%	5.9%	17	Hunt J17		100.0%			1
Hunt A7	50.0%	40.0%	10.0%		10	Hunt J18					0
Hunt A8					0	Hunt J19	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	6
Hunt A9					0	Hunt J20	37.5%	50.0%			8
Hunt A11	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%		9	Fund-Raising Tags*			71.4%	28.6%	7
Hunt A12	35.7%	21.4%	35.7%	7.1%	14						
Hunt A13	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%		11	<b>STATEWIDE:</b>	<b>53.2%</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>17014</b>
Hunt A14	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%	20.0%	15						

Table does not include percentages for unclassified and spike bucks, or Private Lands Management Area (PLM) deer kill, so total percentages may not add up to 100%.

\*Archery Only and Fund-raising Tags are listed separately, and not included within the individual zone or hunt of kill.

\*\* Zone kill was substantially lower than prior years due to extreme fire conditions and US Forest Service-imposed forest closures in 2002.